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Psychological Empowerment in Community-Based Tourism (CBT): a case study of Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Introduction

Tourism as a service industry relies on the goodwill and the work of its local communities, whether it is in a developed area or in more rural areas. A study conducted by Paulauskaite, Powell, Coca-Stefaniak, and Morrison (2017) found that visitors often sought after the local experience which often include interactions with tourism workers and their families showing their pride and spirit to serve, an experience that often influence their return (B Bynum Boley, Ayscue, Maruyama, & Woosnam, 2017; B. Bynum Boley & McGehee, 2014). The opportunities to personalize interactions and sharing cultural experiences are substantial offerings that Community-based tourism has created for its visitors and participants.

Scholars have studied Community-Based Tourism (CBT) for some time and explores many different aspects of the phenomenon in many areas of the world, including its impact towards empowerment. While many aspects of empowerment has been covered in CBT that include political, economic, psychological and social empowerment, there is lack of theoretical understanding that provide an in-depth understanding of each construct. This study intends to explore empowerment in Community-Based Tourism participation through respondents' own experiences through the psychological empowerment construct. Furthermore, the research will hopefully be helpful as a reference point to the impact this initiative has for its participants for new CBT development.

Literature Review

Community-based Tourism has been defined in several ways, all of which involves processes lead by a community offering tours and homestays, often exhibiting cultural or agricultural contexts. Community-Based Tourism has been discussed in the literature extensively in over 20 years. The field has increasingly become attractive as it shows evidence of development in many areas around the world flourish while helping to achieve sustainable goals(Ashley & Garland, 1994; Hiwasaki, 2006). Consequently, CBT has been adopted by both governmental and non-governmental entities in effort to further promote the development of local economies in sustaining the cultural and environmental assets of rural areas around the world(Okazaki, 2008; Polnyotee & Thadaniti, 2015; Theis & Grady, 1991). CBT scholars has proved that it contributes to economic development and overall livelihood while simultaneously showing the pitfalls and the successes of the CBT model.

Among these outcomes, the theme of empowerment has emerged. The concept of empowerment can be defined in many different ways, but two definitions represents two similar schools of thoughts. Rappaport (1987) defines empowerment as “process by which people gain control over their lives through democratic participation in the life of their community” while Bandura (1977); Conger and Kanungo (1988) believe that it is a “process whereby an individual's belief in his or her self-efficacy is enhanced.” Despite the difference of terms, it is clear that empowerment is a process in which an individual gains power within themselves or towards others.

Empowerment received more attention in many fields and disciplines, as it appears more in contexts where the organization compels interaction to exist in high volume. Historically, empowerment arrived in management research in examining employee productivity in the workplace (Spreitzer, 1996), but in tourism research, the focus has been about communities that take part in the industry. A review of Empowerment studies in tourism found that local residents issue as most commonly discussed, followed by gender and employee issues (Aghazamani & Hunt, 2017). While this leads to an abstract idea of local residents issue in empowerment, it exhibits a strong empowerment reference to communities in tourism and allots a greater value to empowerment research.

The questions still arises: how do you recognize empowerment? The answer is layered and lies within the individual. These layers are representative of the empowerment discussions throughout empowerment literature across all disciplines, including in hospitality and tourism. Empowerment in tourism has always been discussed in many forms and categories, but very little focuses on the individual's account on their own experience that would lead the researcher to a greater understanding of their psychological empowerment processes. These studies include the exploration of psychological empowerment towards hotel employees in several countries and its impact towards service quality and work satisfaction (Abd Patah et al., 2009; Amenumey & Lockwood, 2008; Chiang & Jang, 2008; Moura, Orgambidez-Ramos, & de Jesus, 2015). Similar studies were conducted in tourism operations, where psychological empowerment has also been explored within tourist guides (Tetik, 2016) and measured empirically within tourism employees in general (Akgunduz & Bardakoglu, 2017; Lin, Wu, & Ling, 2017). These existing studies that explored psychological empowerment recognizes the construct coined by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and later expanded through management literature by Spreitzer (1996), which follows four indicators of psychological empowerment: *meaning, competence, self-determination or choice, and impact*.

Accounts of psychological empowerment in CBT has explored its surface, though lacks an in-depth perspective on the matter . Empowerment itself can be categorized in many forms, some of which include psychological and community empowerment. While meanings of those concepts overlap, more CBT studies tend to recognize empowerment through shared meanings and patterns found in individual responses to empowerment in both exploratory and empirical studies. Scholars have shown evidence of different empowerment outcomes in many different CBT programs often following evidence of community development (BAO & SUN, 2008; Bing & Ji-Gang, 2012; Jiuxia, 2008; Simons & de Groot, 2015). Empirically, the RETS model measures political and economic empowerment, in addition to individual and community through a series of factors (B. Bynum Boley & McGehee, 2014) which is helpful in seeking presence of empowerment, but lacks in defining what empowerment means to the community.

While this multiplicity of empowerment increases the potential of growth in empowerment research, it undermines a great source of empowerment evidence: the individual. There is little room for psychological empowerment to be understood in great depth when it coexists with others. Thus, in understanding empowerment, an individual shall decide how and when empowerment commences and exploring what those entail is specific to the CBT context studied.

Hence, this study will serve to explore the research question:

To what extent does CBT lead to psychological empowerment processes and outcomes?

Methodology

In exploring and answering the research questions, the study will use qualitative methodology by employing semi-structured interviews. Semi structured interview leads a method of qualitative interviewing that follows a structured guide meanwhile allowing in-depth expressions and discussions. Consequently, the respondents will support the researcher to learn more about their experiences and perspectives towards the phenomenon. As a result, the instruments will appear to be less structured for versatility and flexibility in gathering a richer account on the topic. In this case, empowerment will cover perspectives on their CBT participation and the empowerment constructs: *meaning, competence, self-determination or choice, and impact*. Interview guide will be prepared alongside probes and sample follow-up questions.

The study will recruit key players in several CBT programs in Yogyakarta, a province in Indonesia known for their hospitality and CBT implementation for over a decade. The expected total of informants will be determined when researchers believe it reaches data saturation. To ensure validity and reliability, methods and data triangulation will be in place alongside backward and forward translations.

Data will be analyzed using open coding and axial coding, both through ATLAS.ti software. This will allow researchers to present relationships and categories if and when it exist.

Expected Results

The study intends show evidence of empowerment in the area, and thus exact outcomes cannot be predicted though a few expectations are in place. Through the design of the study, the researchers shall acquire the situations (processes) that show evidence of empowerment as well as how different roles find meaning, choice, competence, and impact whether elevated or unavailable in those processes. This will help participants reflect on their participation in CBT and ultimately answer the research questions in great detail.

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